



MAP INFORMATION WORKING GROUP (WORLD REFUGEE DAY PLANNING COMMITTEE)

AGENDA

Friday April 12, 2019 1pm at MOSAIC: 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver, Classroom 3

Present: Katherine Griffin (MOSAIC), Marissa (MAP), Sadiq Mohibi (Kinbrace volunteer), Peninah Faith Okello (Purpose), Maria Cerviño (Kiwassa NH), Mélodie Honen-Delmar (MAP), Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Claudia Buendia (MSDPR), Savleen Kaur (Options), Jenny Moss (MAP), Lama Olabi (Rainbow Refugee)

By phone: Sara Lopez (VAST) and Kristi Pinderi (speaker)

Chair: Katherine Griffin

- Welcome and Introductions
- Regrets were received from Richard Belcham (co-chair/inasmuch), Fran Gallo (Ready Tour), Paige Slight (LSS)

Katherine: for today's WRD planning, I will let Jenny chair as she has a better sense of the event and the partnership with VPL.

- **Review Agenda:** Jenny had made changes since the agenda was posted – all approved
- Approval of March 29 Minutes (for those present at that meeting – tabled for later)
- **World Refugee Day Event:** overall purpose and elements – Jenny

Jenny:

- The idea of the event is a celebration of refugee claimant successes and their part in building communities. However, there is also room to mention the challenges that claimants face.
- Although MAP's mandate is focused on refugee claimants, we want to focus on claimants, but also include all refugee participants and services.
- Vancouver public library are sponsoring us and provide us with free space, technical materials and promotions.
- Today's meeting is important because we have a deadline by Wednesday next to provide firm program information to VPL that needs to be decided today.
 - We need to think which of the activities we did last year are worth repeating or not.
 - One extra is time in the evening to offer an activity that might draw a big crowd.
 - We have many events during the daytime which attract 'walk through traffic' (peaking at lunch hour) but we should have compelling events at night.
 - The only catch is that VPL cannot provide us with the same support free in the evening as they don't have sufficient staff. But our Vancity grant is very supportive.

- Last year's program included:

1. **A City declaration** with some speeches by the mayor or representative – followed by speeches from two refugee lawyers on current issues for claimants (Peter Edelmann and Lobat Sadrehashemi) REPEAT (but speeches will be downstairs to avoid the heat and congestion.)

2. **Marketplace on the Promenade:** last year over 30 organizations attended – it's very popular. Agencies book a table to promote their activities and provide information. Only issue is more water and rest needed for volunteers, because the place is very hot. REPEAT

3. **“Take a walk in my shoes”** event was very popular. It is an experiential activity that represents the journey of a refugee claimant after they arrive in Canada and why they need protection and how federal government agencies such as CBSA, IRCC, IRB, provincial government agencies such as MSDPR, Health and non-profit agencies interact with them in different ways along the journey. E.g. we had Legal Service Society, SOS, Kinbrace, Rainbow Refugee, VAST and many more agencies participate. A debrief was provided to participants by VAST. Chris Morrissey and Fran helped a lot by writing the individual scenarios. There were some difficulties at the last moment for the IRB and CBSA as for them it was complicated to work with scenarios, and they chose to provide information instead. We must find a way round this if we repeat.

4. An **art exhibition by refugees** (for sale) and music – Fran has offered to run the Refugee Art activity.

Claudia (MSPDR): is ‘Take a Walk in my Shoes’ a role-play?

Jenny: yes, it is. and it was very good. It opened at 10 and closed at 3. This year the library would like us to open at 11 to 2 or 3pm.
This year we could also come back in the evening to do something else.

Sireen (Zaytuna): We could do a movie in the evening too?

Jenny: Yes for sure. We also tried to get the **Human Library Project** but it didn't work because of lack of Human Library volunteers – we didn't have a good connection to the project. Define Human Library:

Lama (Rainbow refugee): Instead of having a book, you can ask someone (a claimant in our case) about their personal experience.

Katherine (MOSAIC): Is this part of the partnership not happening?

Jenny: We can try again, but last year every refugee or refugee claimant was busy that day.

Faith (Purpose): We should ask CBSA to be engaged. We need to have them involved to avoid the stigma about CBSA being scary. They still make Canada safe too.

Jenny: From what I've heard they will most likely be involved.

Claudia: I know, as a government employee, sometimes it's challenging to work on a specific case scenario. Perhaps we could change to an interview?

Savleen: We just need to change it from being a lecture to an interview.

Sireen: Or also we can ask general questions, maybe with CBSA at a booth?

Savleen: If participants are concerned about authority in other regions of the world, it could be viewed as suspicions. We want to try to get people there.

Sireen: But we also need to avoid the stigma Faith mentioned.

Faith: If we continue to say CBSA is not a "good agency", it doesn't help. I was a refugee claimant and the CBSA interview is something everybody needs to pass through. I understand the hesitancy, but maybe if we remove stigma, it will be better. I would like to have CBSA involved; and prepare participants for a real life situation.

Katherine: CBSA and IRB have strong community outreach programs. It is also in their interest to be involved.

Jenny: Sometimes the activity challenges the govt. agencies more than the participants. It is not that easy as they need to work case by case. Fran and Chris maybe included too much detail, and we could simplify it. But I do want to see all the governments involved, but it needs to be done better this year than last.

Katherine: We need to think of the audience too. We need to find a balance for everyone. We could also emphasize some of the challenges of finding housing and how to navigate the settlement system in Canada.

Claudia: Visuals - maybe we can create a diagram to show refugees where to find help. At first no-one tells you what you need to know, and how can you ask for something if you don't even know the opportunity exists? As a refugee sometimes you can feel lost.

Lama: We should get peace geeks involved with their new app. (Explanation: they have Google funding to provide information to newcomers via an app called 'Arrival Advisor').

Sara: After the city of Vancouver proclamation, rather than the speakers in the evening, we could have speakers in the day because some of the clients may want to do that in day. NOTED.

Faith: It is important to educate the public about refugees.

Claudia: Especially with the media today!

Maria: agrees because WRD is not only for refugee claimants, it's also because we need to change the stigma and show the struggle and build empathy.

Savleen: How about if we tell a story with a puppet with projectors as a step process?

Jenny: All we had to decide for today is: what are we going to do? At what time and what's the title? We need to get the basics done.

Jenny: Do we want to have a **theme for this year**? In Abbotsford, we had the theme: 'Starting over'. It created empathy with the enormity of starting over for refugee claimants.

Claudia: Why don't we use the same thing?

Sireen: If it's a celebration, we want to be happy. Non-refugee persons need to learn, but we also need to be happy. If we have entertainment like music, arts and then story, it could be celebration, as well as enjoying different food.

Faith: I agree. When we talk about a refugee claimant, we often forget their successes. Refugees do sometimes lose hope; but if we show the success of starting from the bottom and making it all the way up, it can make a difference in perceptions.

Claudia: 'Starting over' would show success and opportunities.

Lama: and it also gives room for aspiration and success.

Katherine was invited to explain how the event at UFV Abbotsford went:

Katherine: in the Abbotsford event, we focussed on Canada, and moved away from the media narrative of refugee as victim or criminal. At our event, all 5 refugee claimants had already been accepted as protected persons to avoid yet another vulnerability. They shared how does it felt like to start over, and how they got through it. The speakers were from completely different backgrounds and different countries. It connected the past and the present. We had a law student former refugee claimant and now she is working in refugee legal services. It showed the diversity of stories and successes. The other focus was on not presenting as a victim. The focus was on how they found employment, and then housing, and I am now here; instead of saying there is no housing here.

Kristi comes on the call, introduces himself and his role in MAP Abbotsford event

Claudia: We could make a timeline and ask where's home, and put dots to where home is now. I like visuals because it tells a lot without so many words. Some were in other countries; some were already in Canada as a new home. So, it shows that it was a process and that no matter which way; Canada will feel like home at some point.

Maria: This is a nice idea.

Jenny: This is a wonderful tool for refugee claimants but maybe not for the public. We also need to focus on sending a message to the general public.

Claudia: Refugees have specific challenges. But Vancouver's population is largely an immigrant one; so it might be easy to have our message understood

Faith: But for people who have been here longer, there is a pushback.

Jenny: we have been talking about celebrating, is there any more discussion about the message?

Sadiq: I believe it depends on the audience. If we know who they are then we can choose which message to send. Maybe refugees are successful in their lives, but we could also highlight the success of the government and agencies in helping.

Claudia: We want to be happy but at the same time we are not happy. We can have it more than 50% happy but then we need also to show the reality. There are challenges, including the way claimants are treated.

Katherine: It is a question of tone, and everyone will have a table and community space and we need to present all different effects. But we should not fear advocacy for the right message.

Claudia: As a government representative, there are always two sides. Sometimes it is really hard to follow the law - the regulations make it really hard sometimes. We have different roles, different shoes and different hats.

Katherine: If we go on the celebration root, we bypass those issues.

Jenny: I need to make sure in my role to be very diplomatic about that and we need to avoid CBSA changing the format at the last minute. We need to be honest and we don't want to play good and bad cop.

Sadiq: But there is room for advocacy because the refugee claimant life is not perfect. There are some stories, and some government agencies, that should be acknowledged.

Sireen: When we do this kind of event, we only attract the same people. We want to attract new people; otherwise the same people and the same agency that always come.

Katherine: we should go back to the theme: do we want to use it or not?

Kristie: was surprised by the discussion about CBSA. They are not bad cops, just have to follow rules. We need to keep a positive attitude. Being a refugee is a challenge, so why just celebrate the day? It is better to have a message of solidarity between people. We could share the challenges and how there are also successes.

Katherine: it's a celebration of the people rather than the day.

Jenny: and celebrating people who help on the way too. We need to think of a phrase to go with that.

Faith: suggested "walk with me"?

Jenny: What should we keep: we need to keep the declaration, we need to have an elder, we need an MC. The market place is given because there are already people signed up! Each agency will have a table if wanted – just need to sign up. For 'Take a

walk in my shoes', we can repeat it or not. Is there any opposition? NO
For the Art display, Fran said she will organize it and will set up with her team.
For 'Starting over', we have Kristie and Jorge who have agreed to speak.

Sara: suggested that it should be in the day from 11-3.

Sireen: likes 11-3 and the evening too.

Jenny: Agreed, for the evening too.

Kristie: can make it if given one week's notice.

Claudia: For the music, where would that be?

Jenny: We have the promenade and the big room that holds 300 people. After the declaration we should continue with speeches in one of the rooms below to take advantage of the momentum. We could have a panel of refugee lawyer speakers, or agencies presenting their work - if they want too.

Sireen: likes the idea of the immigration lawyers, because sometimes settlement workers need to learn more about the law.

Katherine: do you have a proposal for VPL?

Jenny: Yes, the legal services could be done after the declaration. They are talking. Now, some Canadians are worried about refugees arriving 'irregularly', and the lawyers could provide a good legal basis and facts. Last year, we also had the Virtual Reality experience of being in a refugee camp provided by Azadeh, UNHCR. But it was not that successful because the I Phone was not working. Emily has got this program if we want it.

Katherine: It is off theme and now people are more aware of the camps situations.

Jenny: ok, agreed. (Jenny will tell Emily no thanks)

Katherine: we need to talk more about Canadian issues. There was the quiz that Tammy (inasmuch) was doing about the public education on the different types of refugees.

Lama: WUSC has an interactive map and we had questions prepared from UNHCR information, the participant was asked a question and there were prizes. But it was more of a corner activity.

Jenny: 'Take a Walk in my Shoes' takes half the space in the Alice McKay Room, then we have the art exhibition, either inside the room, or outside, or we could do the quiz in another room?

Maria: Jenny you started talking about the human library, maybe that would be good to keep. If we don't have enough HL volunteers, we could also form our own HL with our refugee claimant contacts.

Lama: Peace geeks could also get involved in that.

Katherine: Yes, and the quiz could be outside the building??

Jenny: we had volunteers go outside to promote 'Take a Walk in my Shoes', but it was challenging to find people who wanted to promote outside. It might be easier to get them around at lunchtime.

Katherine: Will there be food?

Jenny: MAP will provide food to volunteers, but I will ask Emily about restrictions.

Sireen: At SFU, there was a global market and that was quite successful. There was also a movie called Sufrat that is a documentary that we could show.

Jenny: the documentary could be in the evening then.

Lama: last year, at the Vancity theatre they showed a movie and there was really a good panel, the CEO of ISS of BC and two other refugees were there.

Jenny: We could merge movies and "Starting Over" then?

Sireen: Sufrat is a documentary about Palestinian and Syrian women who started a catering company in Lebanese camps.

Maria: but they are not refugee claimants??

Lama: We should check what other events are happening in Vancouver, especially at Vancity. Last year, there were many people there. Chris from Refugee Rainbow attended. We can see if we can link up, but I don't know if we can manage 2 sites.

Jenny: Logistically, it is too much to have 2 sites to coordinate.

Marissa and Katherine: We could check the movies, and see if they are showing on the same day.

Maria and Katherine: If it is at a different time, it might work, depending on what else is happening.

Jenny: For VPL, we can't make people pay because it is accessible free to the public.

Maria: if it is nominal and accessible, it is good.

Jenny: We should also try to find out what ISS is doing. They had a press conference last year, so we have to make sure we don't coincide. There is space in the afternoon, so we could also add other events if your wish.

Sireen: There was also a group of African style storytellers, and that would be good.

Jenny: If you have emerging idea just get back to me with a title, the group involved and what is needed (audio visual, place, time: afternoon/evening) .

At this point, I am also keen on doing starting over again.

Katherine: I like Sara's idea because it builds on momentum. We could do it twice too. One in the evening, one in the day.

Claudia: Would we have enough speakers?

Jenny: Yes, VAST has been amazing providing speakers, so why not?

Lama: if you want to do human library, I can take it to rainbow refugee, especially if they want to use it to spread a message.

Jenny: ACTION: Please get all your plans/wishes, supported by yourselves by Tuesday lunchtime.

But the deadline is really ASAP to get back to me!

Sireen: Is there an honorarium?

Jenny: yes, we have some budget. E.g. for speakers, musicians, elder

Sireen: For the story telling, we could do it right after school.

Jenny: BUT: It's not a good time for school, it is too late in the year. But we can always promote storytelling if you organize it.

Do I have everyone's permission to share our contact list with the Minutes?

All: Yes

Kristi: I would be willing to speak to the media, just let me know.

Jenny: Would you be able to speak right after the declaration? That is when media will be around.

Kristie: Yes, I feel comfortable.

Meeting Organization - how often? When? Where?

Jenny: We usually meet every two weeks because of the shortage of time and the planning of so many details. We can decide to split up and focus on different sections, or all work together. There will be specific jobs to do.

Everyone agreed to Fridays at 1 - 3pm. Where? On April 26th, at MOSAIC

Next time we will go deeper into roles for each committee member, and get into groups.

Everyone PLEASE send their ideas to Jenny by Tuesday at midday.

Next meeting: On April 26th, at 1pm at MOSAIC

Closed: 3pm